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中華基督教會

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The Church of Christ in China  
and  
Church Unity





LET US UNITE!

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The Church of Christ in China  
and  
Church Unity in China

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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CHINA  
6 KUNG HSIEN HUTUNG  
PEIPING, CHINA.

## FOREWORD

The Church of Christ in China as an adventure towards arriving at Church Unity, has aroused much interest both in China and among the Older Churches in the West. To the friends of Church Unity and to those communions in China who are genuinely exploring the possibilities and the desirability of uniting with the Church of Christ in China, there naturally arise questions requiring information on the salient facts and fundamental principles of this united Church. This pamphlet is an effort to provide such information, and for the sake of brevity and clarity and ready reference, the Socratic method is used. All of the questions dealt with and many more have been asked of us. This form of imparting information makes occasional repetition unavoidable. However, since the repetition is generally in the idea and not in its expression, the effect may after all be helpful without being wearisome.

It is quite evident that the answers to these questions can not be taken as authoritative statements delivered by the General Assembly. They are the answers that the Secretariat of the General Assembly have given to inquiring groups with the conviction that they are a true expression of the mind of the General Assembly.

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## I. *Why a united Church?*

We believe that nothing short of one organically united Body was in the mind and purpose of Jesus when He prayed, "That they may be one",

"Denominationalism is based on differences, the historical significances of which, however real and vital to the Church of the West, are not shared by us Chinese."

"Denominationalism, instead of being a source of inspiration, has been and is a source of confusion, bewilderment and inefficiency,"

"We recognize most vividly the crying need of the Christian salvation for China today and we firmly believe that it is *only a united Church* that can save China, for our task is great and enough strength can be attained only through solid unity."

"We believe that there is an essential unity among all Chinese Christians and that we are voicing the sentiment of the whole Chinese Christian body in claiming that we have the desire and the possibility to effect a speedy realization of corporate unity, and in calling upon missionaries and representatives of the Churches in the West, through self-sacrificial devotion to our Lord to remove all obstacles in order that Christ's prayer for unity may be fulfilled in China."

The above statement, drafted wholly by the Chinese Christian leadership and adopted by the official representatives of all the Protestant communions, was made on the only occasion in more than a hundred years when the Chinese Christians had an opportunity to express themselves as a body, through the National Christian Conference that met in 1922.

The years that have intervened have given no indication that the mind or desire of the Chinese Christians has undergone a change. Political,

economic and cultural changes within China since then would rather tend to intensify such convictions and desires.

The Church of Christ in China is an effort to realize the aspirations of the Chinese Christians as above expressed.

2. *Is not the Church of Christ in China merely the achievement of a group of missionaries without whose zeal and assistance the united Church would not have been realized?*

It is true that many missionaries have contributed much to the success of this adventure. Furthermore, we can see no valid reason why they should not cooperate to the limit of their ability, to eliminate denominationalism from Protestant Christianity in China, since they were primarily responsible for the transmitting and planting of denominationalism.

The declaration of the Chinese Christians as stated above (Cf. Question 1) should satisfy all genuine questionings on this point.

3. *How did the Church of Christ in China originate?*

In April, 1918, at Nanking, at the time of the organization of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in China, a conference composed of representatives of the Presbyterian, London Mission and Congregational Churches agreed that union was desirable and appointed a committee to draw up a scheme of union to be submitted to the constituent communions. It soon became evident that the scope of the union should be enlarged so as to make it possible to include all Protestant evangelical communions who have a desire to have discontinued in China the denominational divisions of the West and who are ready to participate in consummating, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, one united Church of Christ for all China.

The Provisional General Assembly met in Shanghai, April 27-29, 1922. The First General Assembly of the United Church of Christ in China met in Shanghai, at St. Mary's Hall, Oct. 1-11, 1927, when 88 commissioners, of whom 66 were Chinese and 22 were missionaries, officially representing 11 Synods and 53 District Associations, were in attendance and effected the union. The Second General Assembly met in Canton, Oct. 26 to Nov. 8, 1930. The Third General Assembly met at Kulangsu, Amoy, Oct. 20-30, 1933.

Five Synods and 34 District Associations have been added to the Church since the union was constituted in 1927, making altogether 16 Synods, 87 District Associations, more than 1,000 organized churches of whom over 300 are self-supporting, 400 ordained ministers, and approximately 130,000 communicants.

The Fourth General Assembly is to meet in Tsingtao in 1937.

4. *What denominational groups are represented in this united Church?*

Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Reformed, United Brethren, United Church of Canada, Independent Chinese Churches.

5. *What missionary societies are cooperating with the united Church?*

There are thirteen missionary societies, from three continents, cooperating with the Church of Christ in China.

(1) American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

(2) Baptist Missionary Society (English).

(3) Church of Scotland.

(4) London Missionary Society.

(5) Presbyterian Church of England.

(6) Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

(7) Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.

(8) Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. (North).

(9) Presbyterian Church in the United States (South).

(10) Reformed Church in America.

(11) Reformed Church in the United States.

(12) United Brethren in Christ.

(13) United Church of Canada.

6. *What are the principles that are guiding this Younger Church in her relations and cooperation with the missionary societies of the cooperating Older Churches?*

The following principles on relationships and cooperation were adopted by the Second General Assembly. *They are the Findings of a Joint Conference* specially called for this purpose, consisting of the General Council of our Church *and an officially appointed representative of each of the cooperating missionary societies:*

The General Assembly recognizes with deep thankfulness to God, the rich fruits of cooperation in service between the Chinese Church and the missionary body in days gone by.

We believe that the earlier period during which the missionary bore the burden of leadership was a necessary stage in a God-directed process of development. It is now also clear both to our Church and to the Older Churches of the West that God has now laid on our Church the responsibility of leadership. Yet at the same time our Church deeply believes that missionaries still have a large contribution to make within the Church.

Our Church wishes solemnly to proclaim that in all efforts to promote Christian work, our Church must steadfastly maintain the spirit and method of cooperation with the missionary forces of the West. Although this kind of cooperation involves organization, personnel and funds, its fundamental basis must ever be mutual friendliness and love and understanding.

*In order to clarify the brief form into which the resolutions on Church and Mission Relationships were necessarily cast and thus help the missionaries and the Boards, for whom these English minutes are prepared, to a more sympathetic understanding of the desires of our Church, the Secretariat is introducing annotations to these resolutions. These annotations will appear in italics.*

For the purpose of meeting the needs of our work, we draw up the following guiding principles of cooperation between the Church of Christ in China and the Older Churches of the West. At the same time the General Assembly recognizes that churches in different localities have not yet reached the same stage of development, so that these principles cannot all be applied at once in every place. Moreover, we are ever conscious of the fact that any kind of Christian work must be based entirely upon a complete mutual love and understanding if it is to be crowned with success.

*It is quite necessary to keep in mind when considering the application of these principles, that they are in the first place guiding principles, and in the second place that the Chinese Church realizes these principles cannot all be applied fully at once in every Synod and District Association. However, it is our conviction that every Synod and District Association and the cooperating Older Churches should accept these guiding principles and apply them to the extent that local conditions will permit, ever keeping in mind the goal of complete application of these principles.*

(a) It is important that our Church and the cooperating Missionary Societies should alike recognize as basic the "church-centric" principle, namely, the Church should be the organization to bear such responsibilities as the administration of work and the use of workers.

*There are Chinese churches which believe that the way to realize an indigenous Church in China is for individual churches as soon as they become self-supporting, also to become independent and sever their affiliations with the missionary agencies of the West. On the other hand, our Church believes that the solution lies in complete fellowship and cooperation between the Chinese Christian workers and the missionaries from the Older Churches of the West. We believe that this fellowship and cooperation can find the fullest expression only within the Church herself, which shall include within the one organization all the workers and the functions which are now divided between the Church and the several missions cooperating with the Church. We do not believe that this fullest fellowship between Chinese and missionary workers is possible so long as we have the dual organization of Mission and Church.*

*The Chinese Church is practically unanimous in the conviction that irrespective of what type of organization was most suitable in the past, at the present and as we face the future, it is more than desirable that the work, which the Church and the Missionary Societies of the West are carrying on, should not be a double headed enterprise, but that the Church itself should bear the sole responsibility of administering the work and of using the workers. But it is most important that our Western friends should realize that the Church which is bearing this sole responsibility for the work and workers is an organization in which the missionary has full share on the basis of full equality with his Chinese colleagues. It is not the Church without the missionary in it.*

(b) The responsibility for and the control of the evangelistic, educational, medical and benevolent work now in the hands of the missions should be transferred to the Church. At the time of such transfer there should be mutual agreement between the Church and the Missionary Society concerned.



*The Chinese Church is very vividly visualizing the time when Missions as administrative agencies shall cease to exist; but the Chinese Church also constantly visualizes the missionary as occupying a very important position within the Chinese Church, administering many of those functions which he now administers as an agent of the Mission, but which same functions he would then administer as an agent of the Church.*

*The missionary within the Chinese Church and on the basis of full equality with the Chinese co-workers, undoubtedly would be appointed by the Chinese Church to any task where his gifts and training would make him the most suitable appointee. This fact must be borne in mind when the question naturally arises as to whether the Chinese Church would be capable of directing and controlling many of the projects now conducted by Missions. The missionaries who are now conducting those projects would still most likely continue to exercise those functions, not as missionaries, but as members of the Chinese Church.*

*The phrase "now in the hands of the Mission" in this resolution is intended to exclude such hospitals as some of our co-operating Missions have built up in this country, which are not under the control of the Missions but are administered through a Board of Directors which represents many other interests in the community beside the Church. Most institutions of higher education in China are also administered by agencies other than the Mission. These too would be exempt from the application of this principle.*

*Inasmuch as the missionaries of said cooperating Missionary Societies would already have participated in their respective Synods and in the General Assembly in determining matters to be submitted to the cooperating Older Churches, they would therefore be supposed not to serve on another council which would in behalf of the Older Church*

*review actions in the initiation of which they already had a part. We believe this would create a status at variance with the principle of complete equality of missionary and Chinese within our Church.*

(c) The General Assembly of the Church has the right of direct relationship with the Mission Boards and Church bodies in foreign countries for negotiation of matters of mutual concern.

*It is our conviction that it ought to be made possible at once for the General Assembly and/or the General Council of the Church to have direct relationships with the respective Mission Boards on matters of mutual concern without the necessity of reference to an intermediary organization such as a Mission Council or Mission. This principle for the present would limit the direct dealings to such matters as are wholly within the functions of the General Assembly and/or the General Council.*

*It is very evident that, if the General Assembly and/or the General Council, before approaching the thirteen unassociated cooperating Missionary Societies on three continents with any request for cooperation in a given project or for securing their consent to any proposal, must first secure the recommendations of their twentyone unrelated Missions scattered all over China, it will be a very difficult matter to achieve any satisfactory results.*

(d) When missionaries first come to China and upon return from furlough, their allocation and work should be determined by the Synod after consultation with the missionary concerned and his Mission, so long as his Mission continues to function in regard to such matters. If a District Association wishes a particular missionary to be allocated for work within its bounds, it should make its request to the Synod.

*It was felt that the interest of the missionary would be better safeguarded if his allocation and his work were determined by the Synod and not by*



*the District Association. If the smaller body were to function in such matters, it is quite conceivable that personal prejudices or animosities might work injustices to the missionary, which would not be probable if a widely representative agency like the Synod were the agency to function in the allocation and direction of his work.*

*It is taken for granted that Mission Boards and the respective Synods will draw up some form of procedure for the loan of missionaries to the Chinese Church, a form of agreement to be mutually agreed to by the Church (or Synod), the missionary and his Mission Board.*

(e) Western missionaries serving within the Church all have the privilege of becoming regular members of the Church. If any missionary finds it impossible for any reason to transfer his membership and become a regular member of the Church, he may become a "cooperative member" of the Church. In that case his status is to be especially fixed by the synod concerned.

*It is highly desirable that the place of the missionary in our Church should be uniform. There is no uniform practice. Some missionaries belong only to the Older Church and have not joined the Church in China. Of these, some have never participated in the Church councils, and others have participated, though they were not members. Some belong to the Church in China and have withdrawn their membership from the Older Church. Some have kept their membership in the Older Church and at the same time hold membership in the Church in China. Very many who have engaged in educational or medical or women's work have never had a place in the Church councils at all. This principle is intended to provide uniformity regarding the place of the Missionary in our Church.*

(f) In order that the "church-centric" principle may become fully operative as soon as possible, we solicit the most sympathetic co-

operation of Missionary Societies in order that our Church may have personnel and funds sufficient to carry on all of her work and secure administrative efficiency.

7. *What is meant by the term "Church-centric"?*

"Church-centric", when contrasted with "mission-centric", connotes that in Church and Mission cooperation, initiative and control should not be divided between the Mission and the Church or reside with the Mission, but should be centralized in and emanate from the Church.

"Church centric", with reference to the varied activities and agencies within the Christian Movement, connotes that the *Church* should be the *heart* of the Christian Movement and that all the other agencies of the Christian Movement are auxiliary agencies of the Church.

8. *What is the place of the missionary in the life and work of this Church?*

The following is the official statement of the Church as to the place of the missionary in the life and work of our Church:

The relationship of the Church of Christ in China with the Older Churches is based on fellowship and love in the service of Christ and the desire to make known the message of God's love to all the world. The Church of Christ in China, having been recognized as an autonomous Church body among her sister Churches in the world, realizes her share and responsibility in the great common task and, for the sake of self-expression and self-development so essential to all life, she must be in a position to carry on and control her working forces.

We express our appreciation of the willingness on the part of the Older Churches to send missionaries to cooperate and work with our Church and to allow them fully to identify themselves with us as a part of the working force.

The Church of Christ in China does not desire in any way to interfere with the necessary and proper jurisdiction of the sending Churches over their missionaries in matters pertaining to their responsibilities to that Church.

We believe that the recognition of the following principles with regard to the relationship of missionaries to the Church of Christ in China, will make their status clear, and work out for the best interest of the work as a whole and enable the missionary to exercise his or her best gifts, and thus contribute in the fullest measure towards the development of Christian work in China.

(a) Missionaries assigned for service to the Church of Christ in China may retain their membership in their sending Church, inasmuch as their maintenance is being supplied by that Church.

(b) When missionaries first come to China, and upon return from furlough, their allocation and work should be determined by the Synod *after consultation with the missionary concerned and his Mission*, so long as his Mission continues to function in regard to such matters. If a District Association wishes a particular missionary to be allocated for work within its bounds, it should make its request to the Synod.

(c) Missionaries when assigned to the Church of Christ in China shall, for all practical purposes, become fully responsible, as to work and conduct, to that Church.

(d) They may become officers and agents of the Church of Christ in China as truly as their Chinese brethren in like position.

(e) In cases of discipline as to conduct, or dissatisfaction on the part of the Church of Christ in China with the performance of the work assigned to the missionary, after thorough investigation and efforts at adjustment by the Synod have

failed, the Church of Christ in China may dispense with his services. In such event a statement of the case shall be prepared by the Synod under whose jurisdiction the missionary is working, and/or by the General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China, to be presented to the sending Church or its agents.

9. *To what degree do the missionaries participate in the administrative councils of the Church?*

The proportion of representation in the Synods and General Assembly varies. The missionaries at the Third General Assembly were one-third of the whole number. All were elected by their respective Synods which are preponderatingly Chinese. The General Council at present consists of 22 members, of whom 18 are Chinese and 4 missionaries, all elected by the Church.

10. *What are the principles guiding the united Church in seeking to achieve Church Unity?*

The road which we have mapped out for us to travel toward the achievement of Church Unity has these characteristics:

Unity is to be achieved not on minimums, but on maximums. Denominational groups are to become constituent parts of the Church of Christ in China, not by being obliged to discard those distinctive teachings and practices which have been their treasured heritage in the past and which God through his Spirit has blessed. But, on the other hand, we are to seek to have each enter into this united Church, bringing her distinctive contribution for the enrichment of all, each being enriched by the distinctive contribution which all the others make.

To make this first principle effective, there is a second principle which has contributed to the measure of Church Unity already attained,—the recognition of each other's faith and order and ordinances as being mutually Christian and bearing the seal of God's approval and power.

The third principle which we have employed to guide us on this untrodden way toward Church Unity is the principle of unity without uniformity, demanding only such uniformity as is necessary for orderly administration, providing such elasticity in administration and organization as to permit experimentation and spontaneity on the part of our Chinese Church, thereby to discover ultimately a form of church organization which will at the same time embody those features which have been the *esse* of the Church throughout these 1900 years, combined with such *bene esse* as will make it truly indigenous and expressive of Chinese life and culture. By following this principle, the Church of Christ in China will, we believe, ultimately achieve a uniformity, but it will be a spontaneous, living uniformity of belief and organization and worship, instead of being mechanical, lifeless and superimposed.

11. *What is the Doctrinal Bond of Union?*

The Doctrinal Bond of Union is brief, but comprehensive:

"Based on the principle of the freedom of formulating her own faith, the bond of union shall consist:

"In our faith in Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and Lord on whom the Christian Church is founded; and in an earnest desire for the establishment of His Kingdom throughout the whole earth.

"In our acceptance of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the divinely inspired word of God, and the supreme authority in matters of faith and duty.

"In our acknowledgment of the Apostles' Creed as expressing the fundamental doctrines of our common evangelical faith."

12. *Is not the Doctrinal Bond of Union a Creed?*

No. In the organization of the Church, it was essential that there be an expression to indicate that the Church is unique from other organizations, guilds and associations, and is historically

identified with the Church of Christ the world over and in all ages.

The Doctrinal Bond of Union does not contain *all* that every Christian body of believers *should* believe. It seeks to express only that modicum of doctrine which all must hold in common if historic Christianity is to be conserved. The doctrinal basis of union, therefore, is an effort to enable those churches whose historic policies have emphasized a written creed, and those churches who have gloried in their freedom from creedal restraints, to unite on the same basis which bound together the Christians of the Early Church.

Nevertheless, with a full knowledge of the several constituents of our united Church of both those who have a creedal heritage and those who have been averse to expressing their faith in any formula apart from the New Testament itself, we have no hesitancy in stating that the Church of Christ in China stands for the great convictions of evangelical Christianity, "for God who in our salvation, has revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; for the Bible as the authoritative standard of faith and life; for the Lord Jesus as God manifest in the flesh, fully human and fully divine; for His offering of Himself on the cross, the Just for the unjust, to reconcile us to God; for His triumph over death and His Abiding presence with God and with His Church on earth; for the Holy Spirit who calls, renews, Christianizes believers of Christ and binds us together into one fellowship in the Church which is the body of Christ, and works in and through us for the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God."

13. *Does the Church of Christ in China have a Creed?*

The Church of Christ in China has not yet formulated a creed. It is the conviction of the Church that in case a creed is adopted, it should be the product of the Chinese Church, expressive of her doctrinal convictions. A creed prepared at

the present time would bear unduly the stamp of the Churches of the West.

The General Council has adopted the following, subject to confirmation by the General Assembly:

Inasmuch as the Church of Christ in China has not as yet formulated a creedal statement, and inasmuch as the Message of the Jerusalem Meeting is the expression of the religious convictions of ecumenical evangelical Christianity, the General Assembly adopts the following portion of that Message to indicate our essential unity with the Christian Church all over the world in the acceptance of those fundamentals of Christian faith most surely believed by us, to serve as a standard in the training and commissioning of the ministers and evangelists of our Church and to be a guide to all of our communicants as they bear testimony among their non-Christian brethren to the power and reality of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

"Our message is Jesus Christ. He is the revelation of what God is and of what man through Him may become. In Him we come face to face with the Ultimate Reality of the universe; He makes known to us God as our Father, perfect and infinite in love and in righteousness; for in Him we find God incarnate, the final yet ever-unfolding revelation of the God in whom we live and move and have our being.

"We hold that through all that happens, in light and in darkness, God is working, ruling and over-ruling. Jesus Christ, in His life and through His death and resurrection, has disclosed to us the Father, the Supreme Reality, as almighty Love, reconciling the world to Himself by the Cross, suffering with men in their struggle against sin and evil, bearing with them and for them the burden of sin, forgiving them as they, with forgiveness in their own hearts, turn to Him in repentance and faith, and creating humanity anew for an ever-growing, ever-enlarging, everlasting life.

"The vision of God in Christ brings and deepens the sense of sin and guilt. We are not worthy of His love; we have by our own fault opposed His holy will. Yet that same vision which brings the sense of guilt brings also the assurance of pardon, if only we yield ourselves in faith to the spirit of Christ so that His redeeming love may avail to reconcile us to God.

"We re-affirm that God, as Jesus Christ has revealed Him, requires all His children, in all circumstances, at all times, and in all human relationships, to live in love and righteousness for His glory. By the resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, God offers His own power to men that they may be fellow workers with Him, and urges them on to a life of adventure and self-sacrifice in preparation for the coming of His Kingdom in its fulness.

"We will not ourselves offer any further formulation of the Christian message, for we remember that as lately as in August, 1927, the World Conference on Faith and Order met at Lausanne, and that a statement on this subject was issued from that Conference after it had been received with full acceptance. We are glad to make this our own:

'The message of the Church to the world is, and must always remain, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

'The Gospel is the joyful message of redemption, both here and hereafter, the gift of God to sinful man in Jesus Christ.

'The world was prepared for the coming of Christ through the activities of God's Holy Spirit in all humanity, but especially in His revelation as given in the Old Testament; and in the fulness of time the eternal Word of God became incarnate and was made man, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, full of grace and truth.



'Through His life and teaching, His call to repentance, His proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom of God and of judgment, His suffering and death, His resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of the Father, and by the mission of the Holy Spirit, He has brought to us forgiveness of sins, and has revealed the fulness of the living God and His boundless love toward us. By the appeal of that love, shown in its completeness on the Cross, He summons us to the new life of faith, self-sacrifice, and devotion to His service and the service of men.

'Jesus Christ, as the crucified and the living One, as Saviour and Lord, is also the center of the world-wide Gospel of the Apostles and the Church. Because He Himself is the Gospel, the Gospel is the message of the Church to the world. It is more than a philosophical theory; more than a theological system; more than a program for material betterment. The Gospel is rather the gift of a new world from God to this old world of sin and death; still more, it is the victory over sin and death, the revelation of eternal life in Him who has knit together the whole family in heaven and on earth in the communion of saints, united in the fellowship of service, of prayer, and of praise.

'The Gospel is the prophetic call to sinful man to turn to God, the joyful tidings of justification and of sanctification to those who believe in Christ. It is the comfort of those who suffer; to those who are bound it is the assurance of the glorious liberty of the sons of God. The Gospel brings peace and joy to the heart, and produces in men self-denial, readiness for brotherly service, and compassionate love. It offers the supreme goal for the aspirations of youth, strength to the toiler, rest to the weary, and the crown of life to the martyr.

'The Gospel is the sure source of power for social regeneration. It proclaims the only way by which humanity can escape from those class-



The First and Second General Assemblies adopted the following statement with regard to Church Union:

"Although the Church of Christ in China has a commonly accepted Bond of Union, nevertheless she has the sincerest respect for the freedom of the local church in matters of belief."

Article 2 of the By-Laws, requiring subscription of local church office bearers to the Doctrinal Bond of Union, should be interpreted in the light of the above statement. As a matter of fact, there is no case on record of individuals being asked to subscribe to the Doctrinal Bond of Union when the churches of which they are members have united with the Church of Christ in China. The churches as organizations are asked to accept the Bond of Union and faithfully observe it.

16. *Is it possible to include the varying types of expressing our Christian belief and practice such as Quakers, Methodists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists, etc., within one Church, without weakening their power of witnessing?*

There is great diversity within the Roman Church. It finds its unity in the primacy of the Pope and the authority of the tradition of the Church and of the Church Councils. Granted loyalty to these central principles, there is the widest scope to give expression to the individual's faith and Christian life. This is provided in the variety of Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods of the Roman Church.

We do not believe that denominationalism is an essential, normal or wholesome expression of the Church of Christ. We dare not believe it is according to the will of God, or the purpose of Christ. We do not believe that as soon as some fresh truth or some new emphasis on old truth is revealed to a group, be it small or large, it must separate itself from the rest to form a sect or denomination of its own. We believe that this fissiparous tendency should be eradicated at all cost.

The Church of Christ in China builds its unity on the Person of Christ, our divine Lord and Saviour, on the acceptance of the Word of God as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, on the acceptance of the Apostles' Creed as adequately testifying to those essential beliefs and experiences held in common by us with the Church Ecumenical. Unity built on such a foundation, affords adequate freedom to express in various ways our Christian faith and life on those matters where it is not only permissible to differ, but concerning which our very diversity serves to enrich the life and experience of the whole body.

17. *How is it possible to conserve the complete freedom and autonomy of the local church (where churches with a Congregational background should so desire) and at the same time be a constituent part of church councils which provide for appeals to higher church courts and exercise functions which are alien to the historic principles of Congregationalism?*

In the first place, there is a very emphatic trend among Congregational Churches in the West to depart in practice from the historic principles of the complete freedom and autonomy of the local church and to approximate the system of church organization and administration of the so-called connectional churches such as the Methodist and the Presbyterian. This trend is still more prevalent among the missions and Younger Churches in China of those communions which were founded on the principle of the independence and autonomy of the local church. It has been discovered that decentralized independence of the local congregation has not proved highly efficient in China.

It should always be remembered that ecclesiastical administration and control differs from political administration and control in that its authority must necessarily be persuasive. It cannot be coercive. Therefore many of the fears

entertained by those who have been nurtured in "Congregational" communions, as to undue interference of the higher councils in the life and organization of the individual church will hardly be realized.

Furthermore, the power of appeal to higher councils is generally in the interests of the individual and by the individual, thus safeguarding rather than infringing upon the rights of the individual believer.

18. *Is the Church of Christ in China another denomination?*

The Church of Christ in China is not another denomination, but is a sincere effort to obviate denominationalism. She recognizes all the existing Protestant evangelical communions as possessing essential Christianity. She attempts to create a Church whose essential faith is in thorough accord with the faith held in common by His Church during these 1900 years. In this respect she is inclusive in her outreach. Her organization is fluid and elastic to such a degree as to make it possible to have each of the evangelical communions who seek unity with our Church, bring its distinctive heritage that has abiding value and have it woven into the fabric of our common faith and fellowship.

19. *Is not the Church of Christ in China actually Presbyterian in polity?*

There are of course Presbyterian elements in her form of organization. According to Presbyterian polity, each parish is governed by a session composed of the pastor who is *ex officio* Moderator, and a group of "elders" elected by the congregation from its own number and ordained by the pastor with the laying on of hands. In the higher councils, there is always a 50-50 representation of "elders" and ministers.

In the Church of Christ in China many parishes or local churches still continue to be organized along Presbyterian lines. This is their privilege on the basis of Congregational freedom of organization. But the higher councils of the Church have so enlarged the basis of representation as to include others besides elders and ministers among those qualified for membership. Women as well as men, deacons, doctors and educators as well as elders and ministers, may represent the Church in District Association, Synod or General Assembly.

20. *Is the Church of Christ in China a federal or an organic union?*

When the Committee was appointed to prepare a scheme for church unity, it was definitely instructed to draft a scheme for federal union. However, when the Committee met, it was at once discovered that the Chinese of the Committee had no desire for a federal union. They keenly felt that, in spite of instructions to the contrary, they should be courageous and submit a plan for organic union. This was done. Their faith was justified, and the Church of Christ in China, as constituted, is explicitly and in reality an organically united Church.

21. *Can a Church be a constituent part of the Church of Christ in China and at the same time of the Mother Church of the West?*

Such a relationship could hardly be effected without doing violence to the fundamental principles of our organic unity. On the other hand, we realize that there may be a period of transition while effecting the integration, when a dual organic relationship can hardly be avoided. It should in such an event be explicitly for a limited period that such a relationship might be sustained; as, for example, for the period of eight years where the general council of the Mother Church is a quadrennial gathering, and for five years where such a general council meets annually.

We very much hope that the Mother Church will sustain and maintain a special, intimate relationship with those of our Church who are spiritually so deeply indebted to her.

22. *Is it possible, as a constituent part of the Church of Christ in China, to retain fellowship with the historic communions of the West?*

The General Presbyterian Alliance and The International Congregational Council have both accorded full membership to the Church of Christ in China. Negotiations are in progress with the Baptist World Alliance and the Ecumenical Methodist Conference for similar recognition.

This relationship has these values:

(a) It maintains a channel for fellowship with the respective Mother Communions in the West.

(b) It provides an international world-wide relationship and fellowship for our Church. This serves as a safeguard against the natural tendency as a nation-wide Church to become too nationalistic in our life and thought and attitude.

(c) It makes a point of contact with the Older Churches to influence them however feebly, to direct their thinking and efforts more resolutely to appropriate the same benefits and joys of Christian unity that are ours in an increasing measure.

23. *What is the policy of the united Church as to registration with the Government?*

It is the purpose of the Church of Christ in China to register with the Government just as soon as the Legislative Yuan has codified laws providing for such registration.

24. *What is the attitude of the Church of Christ in China with regard to Order and the historic Episcopacy?*

Thus far the Church of Christ in China has made no declaration on these questions. This is not through lack of appreciation of their funda-



mental importance, but, inasmuch as the constituent parts of the Church of Christ have always recognized the validity of each other's ministry, there has been no immediate need for arriving at a common mind regarding either Order or the Episcopacy.

We believe that the Church of Christ in China would give acceptance to the following statements adopted by the uniting communions of the proposed "Church of South India", inasmuch as they are in accord with the principles that have been guiding us in our great adventure:

"Comprehension and not limitation is our aim." Just as in the present fluid form in which our organization is cast, the fundamental principles of both Congregational and Presbyterian polity are conserved, so any larger union with episcopally-governed communions would require the Church of Christ to make it possible for "all that has been found helpful in each of the uniting churches to be included, and for each church to find its special contribution enriched by what the others contribute."

*"Jesus Christ is the Person in Whom the Churches unite.* His life and death and ever-living presence must be central in the thought, life and devotion of each member of the Church, as in that of the Church as a whole. His cross is the place of meeting. The united Church will therefore desire to bring together all the different types of spiritual experience represented in the uniting Churches, and to keep together in the one Brotherhood those who emphasize the individual experience of the Christian heart, those who place the cross in the centre of their worship, investing with every solemnity of ritual the sacramental presentation of the great act of man's redemption, and those who bid the Church take full account of all new knowledge of the world which God's Spirit imparts to the human mind by channels other than those of organized religion."



“The uniting Churches gratefully acknowledge the grace of God abundantly manifested in each other’s ministries and the spiritual efficacy of these ministries in the work of the Kingdom of God, and they thank God for the blessings He has given to the world through them. They confidently expect that He will bestow even greater blessings when these ministries, hitherto separate, are working together in one fellowship. For the united Church will be formed by a combination of different elements, each bringing its contribution to the whole, and not by the absorption of any one by any other. It will, therefore, also be a comprehensive Church; and its members, firmly holding the fundamentals of the faith and order of the Church Universal, will be allowed wide freedom of opinion in all other matters, and wide freedom of action in such differences of practice as are consistent with the general framework of the Church as one organized body.”

“The uniting Churches believe that the Ministry is a gift of God through Christ to His Church: that God Himself calls men into the Ministry through His Holy Spirit, and that their vocation is to bring sinners to repentance, and to lead God’s people in worship, prayer, and praise, and through pastoral ministrations, the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments (all these being made effective through faith), to assist men to receive the saving and sanctifying benefits of Christ and to fit them for service; and they believe that, in ordination, God, in answer to the prayers of His Church, bestows on and assures to those whom He has called and His Church has accepted for any particular form of the Ministry, a commission for it and the grace appropriate to it.”

25. *Why confine this effort to realize Church Unity to Protestant denominations?*

Our ultimate goal should be and is a union of Roman, Greek, Protestant and other Christian

Communion. Only then will Christ's prayer, "That they may be one", be fully answered.

This ultimate goal, we believe, can be approached best by concentrating our immediate mind and will and prayers to securing the organic unity of all Protestant evangelical churches.

26. *What is the system of organization of the Church of Christ in China?*

There are four grades of church councils, viz., the Local Church or Parish, the District Association, the Synod, and the General Assembly.

The form of government is an adventure in freedom for diversity of expression within the unity, recognizing that variety in the operations of the Spirit is as essential to the true welfare of the Church as oneness of Spirit.

The principles underlying the organization are democratic and not hierarchical. Power and authority are not imposed from above downward or from without inward. It is the hope rather, that power and authority within the Church shall be a normal growth, outward and upward. The authority of Jesus was a persuasive authority rather than coercive. The authority of His Church must be likewise.

The Constitution demands no stereotyped, rigid form of *local church* government. But it permits that elasticity of expression in organization which will permit "daring experimentation" in seeking to discover that form of church government which will most adequately lend itself to Chinese customs, life and thought.

The form that the organization of the *local church* takes may vary because of historic, economic or geographic reasons. Some local churches may have deacons or elders only, others may have both deacons and elders. City parishes usually consist of only one congregation or group of Christians, while in the rural areas a group of congregations, each with a paid or volunteer lay leadership, may unite in forming one parish with

one "session" and an ordained pastor ministering to their spiritual needs.

Some churches may be governed through a "session" along Presbyterian lines. Others may have their life and work directed by the local church council or by a board of deacons, as the local church or parish may desire.

Each *District Association* determines the form of organization of the local church within the district. There may be some district associations in which local churches will be organized with a polity along Congregational lines. Other district associations may have their local churches organized according to Presbyterian polity. Some district associations may have several types of local church organization within their respective areas.

There is nothing in the Constitution which would prevent any group of district associations forming a Synod, from having their churches organized under an Episcopal system in so far as such a system would not contravene the fundamental principles of the validity of each other's ordination.

The *Synod*, within very broadly defined limits, determines the type of organization of its constituent district associations. Its powers and functions are defined in more detail in the Constitution. The synod is the equivalent of an Anglican diocese or a Methodist conference.

The unity of the church is found (in organization) within the *General Assembly*, and (in spirit) in its loyalty and devotion to our everliving and blessed Lord, Christ Jesus.

The General Assembly constitutes a "bond of union". Its relation to the synods is respectively the same as the relation of the synods to the district associations. If questions arise concerning church government or doctrine, the General Assembly is authorized to deal with them. The

General Assembly organizes and administers the work of the Church as a whole and seeks to give guidance and help to the synods and their churches in the performance of our common task.

The *General Council* is the *ad interim* administrative agency of the General Assembly, functioning for the General Assembly between the quadrennial meetings of the same.

The General Council consists of one member elected by each synod, and a councilor-at-large for every four synods, elected by the General Assembly. The Moderator and the Honorary Treasurer are full ex-officio members. The General and Executive Secretaries are also ex-officio members but without vote.

The General Council directs the work and policies of the Secretariat. All the functions of the General Assembly necessary between its quadrennial meetings, are exercised by the General Council. It also serves as the Nominating and Business Committee for the General Assembly Meeting.

#### 27. *How are synods delimited?*

The principle by which synods are delimited varies. Dialect plays a great part in defining the area of synods in South China. Kwangtung and Fukien each have three synods. In North and Central China, synods and provinces are as a rule coextensive. There are some synods which are spread over two and even three provinces. Where synods are too large, the expense of travel for synodical and committee meetings militates against effective administration.

There are places where synods temporarily overlap for the reason that there has not yet been sufficient time to effect integration. This need cause no concern, as churches uniting in the West have had the same experience.

28. *Would the addition of several large, closely organized Churches, like the Methodist or Anglican, tend to encumber and make unwieldy the Church of Christ in China?*

The General Assembly of the Church of Christ in China will become more and more the central unifying administrative council responsible for initiation and administration of all intra- and extra-synodical activities and responsibilities, defining the policies and programs and standards for the whole Church and serving as the highest council of the Church, to which the synods may refer matters for counsel or action.

The trend in the organization and building up of the Church of Christ in China is toward the creation of strong, vigorous synods. The major activities of the Church will be administered through the synods. There is no fixed rule governing the size of synods. Their size can therefore from time to time be re-delimited so as to function with the greatest measure of efficiency.

29. *Have men and women the same status in the united Church?*

The Constitution makes no distinction between men and women. Women at present are actually serving as deacons, as elders, and as members of district associations, synods, General Assembly, and their standing committees, and as evangelists. No Chinese women have as yet presented themselves as candidates for ordination to the ministry. Whether ordination would be extended or withheld by any synod in case of application by a woman candidate with proper training and other qualifications, would depend largely on circumstances and on the attitude of the particular synod.

30. *Who determines the medical, educational and evangelistic policies and programs within a given area?*

The guiding principle of the General Assembly is to permit a variety of experimentation along these lines and, through the sharing of our common experiences, ultimately to adopt a uniform policy. Some synods have not included hospitals or higher educational institutions within the scope of their organization. Some co-operating missionary societies have it as their definite policy to create community boards of directors who will eventually assume full responsibility for the maintenance of the hospital, rather than a board of directors appointed exclusively by the Church.

The increasingly accepted policy is to include the medical and educational work within the scope of the synod. Such work would have its policies and programs projected and directed by a Medical and an Educational Committee, respectively. Such committees would be composed of those who by training and experience would be best qualified for the task.

31. *What measure of growth in actual unity has been realized beyond merely the adoption of a common name?*

A Church is a living organism. And since it is not a mechanical product, a united Church cannot be created by mechanical processes. It has to be a growth. It takes time and prayer and patience and good-will and the will to unity. The easiest accomplishment is to change the old historic name to that of "The Church of Christ in China". However, there are some local churches who for sentimental reasons still retain their old denominational name. We exercise no coercion to effect a change, confident that time will work that good work and bring with it a loyalty which would not have been possible had coercion been applied.

Unity, beyond unity in name, is first and most readily realized in the General Assembly and the

General Council. In fact, there are no longer any evidences of our denominational origins in the meetings of the General Assembly or of the General Council. This has been remarked by many who have attended the meetings of these two bodies.

The synod and the district association are the councils in which our old divisions will be apparent the longest. This need not discourage us, as the same experience holds true in the recent church unions in Canada, England and Scotland.

32. *What effect does the uniting of the Chinese Churches have upon the interest and the giving of their Mother Churches in the West?*

Union by the Younger Church has invariably strengthened the interest of the Older Churches in their missionary enterprise in China. Nor has such union created a barrier to their continued financial support. As a matter of fact, the attitude of the Western Churches toward denominationalism is becoming increasingly indifferent. There is a growing movement toward Church Unity in both Great Britain and America. Our own adventure in Church Unity is frequently referred to with deep satisfaction,—“the Younger Church pioneering the way for the Mother Church in the effort to attain Church Unity.” Such an attitude toward our united Church by the Mother Churches would tend to increase their giving both in grants and in personnel.

33. *How is the General Council budget provided?*

The budget of the General Council is for the present provided from the following sources:

- (a) Endowment.
- (b) Remittances from synods, district associations and local churches.
- (c) Contributions from missionaries and Chinese employed workers and individual laymen.



(d) Grants from cooperating Missionary Societies. •

It is recognized that this method of financing the budget is based on temporary expediency and is to apply only until such time as a more simple, satisfactory and permanent method can be employed.

The development and growth of the Younger Church is creating needs and opportunities for certain General-Assembly-wide projects, such as Summer Conferences for Leadership Training, a Christian Family Weekly, an Evangelistic Band, etc., which call for cooperation of all the societies cooperating with the Church of Christ in China. Such financial cooperation is not to be looked upon as a subsidy (which it is not) but only as larger and more inclusive forms of evangelism and training which have characterized the missionary work since its beginning.

34. *What financial responsibilities are involved for any communion or its cooperating Missionary Society in uniting with the Church of Christ in China?*

Apart from the grants indicated in the answer to the previous question, there are no financial responsibilities beyond those which would exist even if such a communion did not enter the union. We refer to the administrative expenses of Diocesan, Conference, synodical or district meetings, which consist mainly of travel and entertainment for the delegates to such meetings. The contributions to the General Assembly and to the synodical and district association budgets are all on the voluntary basis. The grants from the Missionary Societies vary. One society contributes nothing. The Churches contribute according to their economic ability and to the degree that they have become General-Assembly-minded. This last is largely a question of education and multiplied contacts.



35. *How are the combined Church and Mission grants administered?*

Where the Synod or the District Association has a common, current work fund to which all the missions cooperating in that area contribute, the distribution of the funds and the requests for further grants would be administered by a Finance and Personnel Committee consisting of nationals and representatives of the cooperating missionary societies. The principle upon which the requested grant should be distributed among the cooperating bodies would have to be determined by local circumstances; each project would have to be considered separately.

The General Council has proposed the following plan for the administration of cooperative projects, to the Synods and the cooperating Missionary Societies:

The Church of Christ finds itself today in a new situation which demands that renewed attention be given to this vital matter of Church and Mission Cooperation. The principles laid down more than five years ago take on new urgency in the light of new needs and opportunities. It is most important to discover ways to implement them and to make them more effective throughout the Church.

The new situation is in part the result of changes in the national life of China and the rapid growth of the Church herself. During these five years, China has suffered unparalleled disasters and difficulties and made unprecedented progress in the fundamentals of reconstruction and national unity. The Church has grown in numbers, in understanding of her message, and in her desire for unity and independence.

A radical change has come about in the actual contribution of missionaries and funds from abroad, which have decreased throughout the Church. This decrease has fallen much more

heavily upon some synods than upon others, but there has been no machinery even for consultation with a view to relieving such burdens. The diminished resources demand the most intimate cooperation so as to avoid overlapping and multiplication of overhead, and to assure the wisest and most effective use of the resources available. The cooperating agencies should be so channeled as to promote the *unification* of the Younger Church which is very far flung and whose constituent parts have such diversified historic back-grounds.

The Church will find it exceedingly difficult to remain united even in name and spirit, if it must maintain divided channels for securing grants and personnel from the cooperating Older Churches.

### **Plan for Closer Cooperation:**

In order to secure closer cooperation in the important task of building a completely integrated and autonomous Church, and in order to provide facilities for working out together the best procedure in meeting new needs as they become apparent, we submit the following memorandum on the meaning of the "Church-centric" policy as it appears to the General Council of the Church, together with concrete plans for closer cooperation both at home and abroad.

#### **I. *Memorandum on the "Church-centric" Principle***

We recognize the following five stages in the growth of the Church, and recognize that each step is one stage nearer to the Church-centric principle than the one before it. This does not mean that all churches must pass through all these stages, but merely provides a standard of reference by which missions and synods can estimate their present position with regard to the "Church-centric" principle, with a view to future advance.

(1) The Mission control stage. This is naturally the situation at the beginning of Christian work in a non-Christian country. At this stage all such work is first done by missionaries, and later controlled by missionaries assisted by nationals. Properly speaking, there is no church at this stage. We believe the Church of Christ in China is everywhere beyond this stage.

(2) The Church and Mission work along parallel lines, each independent of the other, the church controlling Chinese funds and personnel supported wholly by Chinese gifts, the mission controlling the missionaries and funds from foreign sources. In some parts of the Church of Christ in China this is the present situation; others have passed through this stage; others have omitted it and gone directly from the first to the third stage.

(3) The Church and Mission work through an intermediate cooperative organization on which both agencies appoint representatives. This stage represents the understanding not only that the Church has its place as an independent organization, but further that the Christian task in any given place needs to be approached as a whole with a unified front, and should not be divided up between two separate and independent bodies. We know of no instance where this stage has actually been reached where the Church has been willing to go back to stage two.

(4) The Mission and missionaries work in and through the Church organization, in which the missionaries have a place on an equality with Chinese Christians. Foreign missionaries and foreign funds are placed at the disposal of the Church which is held responsible for their use in general, but not in such ways as would mean dictation of policies by the Mission Board. At this stage the Church has direct relationships with the Mission Board or its responsible representatives. Some synods have already reached this stage and others are ready for it.

(5) The stage of independent, self-supporting, self-propagating churches. This does not mean that at this stage missionaries and foreign financial help will be undesired,\* but merely that they will no longer be indispensable. Every synod which has reached the fourth stage should work as rapidly as possible to attain this status, not only for local churches, but for district associations and synods and for the entire Church of Christ in China.

## *II. Plan for Closer Cooperation in Europe and America*

(1) We believe that it is in the best interests of the Church of Christ in China that cooperative councils or committees be organized in London and New York respectively, through which the Mission Boards cooperating with our Church can face together the needs of the Church as a whole. Direct relationships of the same scope would be established between the General Council and the cooperating Older Church in New Zealand.

(2) The details of the organization of these councils would be for the constituent cooperating Societies to define. Their functions would be such as these Societies are willing to delegate and as the council is willing to assume.

(3) We believe that such councils can serve the interests of the Church of Christ in China in at least two respects: (a) They will enable the different cooperating Western Churches to visualize our Church *as a whole*, and thus enable them to give such aid in personnel and funds as they make to any particular synod with the background of the total needs of the Church rather than limiting their vision to one or more clearly delimited spheres of influence, to which their interest is narrowly confined. (b) The development of the life and work of the Church has created demands for projects which are national in scope

and yet which are essential to the best development of the regional and parochial projects in which the various western Churches are cooperating. Such councils are indispensable if the Assembly is to meet successfully these challenging tasks.

(4) We fully recognize that the different western Churches have special interests and responsibilities with regard to the Chinese Churches which have grown up as a result of their missionary work. *We visualize the work of the Cooperative Councils to be set up as supplementary to such relationships, rather than as attempting to take their place.*

36. *What are the accepted policies of the Church of Christ in China with regard to subsidies and the local church?*

It is now generally recognized that the policy of providing subsidies by the missionary societies for the budget of the local church has not proved the wisest policy.

The China Delegation to the Jerusalem Meeting, in their report recorded as their conviction that all new churches in the future should be organized on a self-supporting basis from the very start; that churches now receiving subsidies from abroad should receive a diminishing subsidy with a view of becoming self-supporting at the earliest possible time.

The General Council at its Annual Meeting, 1929, adopted the following resolutions which were confirmed by the Second General Assembly:

“A joint committee representing mission and synod, or district association, should make a survey of all churches receiving subsidies from the Older Churches of the West, with the purpose of having the respective churches attain self-support as soon as possible.

“(1) That hereafter in organizing new churches, emphasis should be placed on the necessity of self-support.

“(2) That as to churches already organized, funds released through a diminishing subsidy to such churches, may in the future be applied to:

“(a) Mobile evangelism;

“(b) The production of literature;

“(c) The expenses of church administrative councils, such as the General Assembly, synods, and district associations.”

37. *What are the principles that should govern any Committee in the administration of grants from the Older Churches?*

The Second General Assembly adopted the following resolution on the administration of grants from the Older Churches:

We assure the missionary societies that, where grants from the Older Churches have been given to our Church, we consider the following as fundamental principles: (1) that the greatest prudence should be exercised in the control and expenditure of the same; (2) that prompt and accurate and audited reports shall be submitted to the cooperating missionary societies; and (3) that the allocation of the grant shall be by those who are not personally recipients of any portion of such funds.

38. *Is the fact that a Church becomes a constituent part of the united Church supposed to imply a diminution in the contribution of grants and personnel from the Mother Church?*

The fact that a Church has become a constituent part of the united Church in no wise should affect the continued cooperation of the Mother Church as to either grants-in-aid or missionary personnel. The only difference would be that such cooperation would thereafter be channelled through the General Assembly or synodical or district organization, instead of through the Conference Finance Committee or whatever the agency was through which these grants were transmitted and administered prior to the union.



39. *Does the synod invite and locate Chinese workers and determine their salaries?*

This is one of the details which must be left to the constituents of each synod to decide, taking into consideration the local conditions.

Pastors of churches are invariably, though not necessarily, invited by the local self-supporting church, and the amount of the salary is also determined by the congregation and pastor concerned. Workers whose salary is provided in whole or in part by the synod, would have their work and location determined by the synod to the degree in which such worker's salary is provided from the general fund administered by the synod.

There are areas where district associations are large and provided with adequate leadership. Under such circumstances the district association may exercise the above functions instead of the synod. The accepted policy of the Church is in favor of administrative control centered in the synod.

40. *What is the need of having both a National Christian Council and a nation-wide Church like the Church of Christ in China?*

Their functions are very different. The Church of Christ in China is fundamentally a Church. The National Christian Council is an auxiliary of the Churches.

The Church of Christ in China, as a Church, ordains ministers, administers through its clergy the Sacraments, organizes churches, administers discipline, is the fellowship of believers for worship, exhortation, Christian nurture and service. The Church is mystically speaking, yet really, the Body of Christ.

The National Christian Council has none of these functions. It is a federation of several communions "to work together for such things as they may think can be done together better than by acting separately". It renders very valuable

services to the Church in lines of research, in serving as a clearing house of experiences in the work of the Christian Movement, in exploring new and possibly more fruitful ways of winning men and women for Christ, and creating a Christian social and economic order. But in the final analysis, the work of the National Christian Council can be conserved and implemented among the churches only as each communion employs certain individuals for this very purpose. It is right here that there appears to be duplication. However, it is only seemingly so. As long as there are even two communions in China which are unable to unite *organically*, but can cooperate in some forms of Christian work, so long is there a place and a need for an agency like the National Christian Council.

In becoming a constituent part of the Church of Christ in China, churches who have hitherto cooperated with the National Christian Council will still continue to do so through the Church of Christ in China which is the largest cooperating member of the National Christian Council.

41. *Would it not be better to seek to achieve unity by starting to bring about regional union, rather than by beginning at the top or through the national organizations?*

The Church of Christ in China does not consider these two methods mutually exclusive. We believe in employing both approaches. For connectional Churches, such as Presbyterian, Methodist, and Anglican, the only possible method is to initiate and consummate the movement through the national council since historically such communions move as one body. The intermediate stages should be both regionally and nationally directed. The best preparation for the union of the national bodies is for the several churches locally or regionally to cooperate in such projects as evangelistic campaigns, revival meetings, training institutes, etc.



42. *What is the greatest difficulty experienced by the united Churches, in uniting locally?*

It is not a doctrinal difficulty. It is almost wholly *administrative*. Each Younger Church bears distinctive and clearly defined relationships to the Mother Church. The Mother Church has employed her own distinctive methods in the administration of her grants and in the organization of the cooperative work. Standards of salary, emphases in cooperative principles, are varied. And men are creatures of habit. Were we not, we could do only a tenth of what habit enables us to accomplish. Habit becomes an impediment when a union of churches requires certain changes and departures from the old ways to which we have become accustomed.

Consequently we have discovered that administrative integration in the restricted area of district associations and in some synods, must be a gradual process. Especially is this so where in one group the mission may have transferred control to the Church, while in another group the control of funds and activities is still largely mission-centric. Similar difficulties may exist where the churches of one part have been founded and nurtured on the self-supporting basis, while other churches have been founded and are still maintained on the subsidized basis.

Such situations do not create insuperable obstacles. They simply call for patience, mutual sympathy and a resolute will for unity.

Where complete integration is not at once possible, the communions should unite in organization and work as they find it possible at the time of union; with that as the basis of departure they might continue the process of integration along such lines as these:

(1) The respective councils agree to hold their annual meetings at the same time and place, arranging for joint sessions of devotional and inspirational nature.

(2) Arrangements might be made for each to have one or two representatives without vote, on the other's respective executive or administrative committee.

(3) A coordinating council might be organized, to which, gradually, more and more of the activities of the two separate councils could be referred until circumstances would make possible the realization of complete administrative unity.

43. *Is there not a danger that a smaller Church will be swallowed up by merging with such a large Church?*

The freedom given to the local congregation in matters of organization and worship, largely obviates such a danger. It is far more likely that, by uniting with the larger communion, the best leadership of the smaller Church thereby may exert an influence much greater and more widely extended than would have been possible, had such a church refrained from union.

44. *What adjustments and changes must a Church make to become a constituent part of the Church of Christ in China?*

A communion whose churches are in areas where there is no existing synod or district association of the Church of Christ in China needs make a minimum of adjustments; such as, the change of name to the Church of Christ in China, the adoption of the Constitution, and the relating of herself to the higher councils of the Church as prescribed in the Constitution and By-Laws. That is, if the new constituency is only a district association, her relationship to synod and General Assembly should conform to the Constitutional requirements for all constituent councils of the same grade.

If the churches of such a communion are in areas where there is an overlapping with existing district associations and synods, then it is desirable that a Cooperative Council be appointed by the two bodies to bring about such mutual

adjustments as to bring about the largest possible degree of immediate cooperation and unity, with the explicit purpose of achieving complete integration as speedily as possible.

45. *What are the advantages of such a united Church?*

It will assist the Church in discovering a church organization indigenous in character, suited to Chinese culture, customs and practice.

It will enable the Chinese Christians the more resolutely to formulate Christian truth in ways expressive of Chinese thought and life, and to create opportunity to discover new truth to a greater degree than would be possible if the churches continued separately, perpetuating western organization and western modes of thought and ways of expression.

Such an organization as the Church of Christ in China enables the constituent groups to pool their spiritual and administrative experiences. Only an organically united Church is adequate for the task and for the unparalleled opportunities before the Christian Movement in China.

The leadership of the Christian Church must be pooled if the Church is to take over the functions hitherto exercised by missions. No single denominational group has adequate manpower and financial resources. It will multiply the usefulness of the available leadership of the united bodies.

To achieve unity among Christians, by forming one Christian Church for China, would be a great aid in the realization of national unity.

Such an organization as the Church of Christ in China is a distinct help in conserving and strengthening certain types of unity already attained, such as union colleges, middle schools and theological schools now conducted under cooperative control.

Such a larger church union lifts workers out of a relatively narrow, sectional and denominational setting, and enables them to enjoy the benefits of a nation-wide affiliation.

It is of great value to the smaller missions and the smaller churches. The entrance into the nation-wide Church helps them to become a more efficient, forward looking Church. It has helped isolated churches to get the larger, wider national view.

It should help to reduce the number of administrative units in the Christian Movement in China, and thus greatly facilitate united planning and action, both within the Church of Christ in China and in cooperation with the Older Churches of the West.

Such a united Church meets the aspiration of the Chinese. She realizes in a corporate way a union which the Chinese Christians have always felt, but which the importation of western denominationalism has prevented them hitherto from expressing in an organized way.

Its voice to the churches (local) on certain matters would come with greatly added weight.

The united Church does not emphasize conformity, but allows for a wide, diversified expression within the unity, thus contributing to the enrichment of the whole Church in a way which would not be otherwise possible where tradition is so potent.

The Church of Christ in China is seeking to achieve church unity through the confidence that each one of our Protestant evangelical communions has discovered a pathway to God. Each has become enriched through some particular Christian experiences which could not have been discovered otherwise. In coming into the Church of Christ in China, the united Church will be enriched, as would not be possible otherwise, by those spiritual experiences which the individual constituent communions have discovered and appropriated in the years gone by.

46. *What steps should be taken by a church which is considering union with the Church of Christ in China?*

As a preliminary step, it might be desirable to engage in informal correspondence or conference, when the representatives of the Church of Christ in China will be prepared to provide full information as to the united Church, her origin, the principles underlying her polity, her relationship with other communions, etc.

The next step might well be the formal appointment of a Committee to confer with the General Council of the Church of Christ in China, which is the Standing Committee on Church Union. After mutual conference and agreements as to the basis on which the union is to be effected, the joint report would be submitted to the church councils of the two communions for final action according to the usual procedure followed by the respective communions. The procedure with the Church of Christ in China would be the approval of the union by the General Council, and ratification by the General Assembly.

After both communions have ratified the basis of union, arrangements are then made by mutual conference as to time, place and manner for formal consummation of the union.

47. *Does the Church of Christ in China consider her present method of approach to the realization of comprehensive Church Unity as an adequate, and as the ultimate, scheme?*

Our experience up to the present causes us to believe more than ever that the trail that we are blazing is the most hopeful pathway in the adventure toward Church Unity. We who have trodden this pathway thus far, would be the last to claim that it is the final pathway. We can hope for nothing better than that it will before long emerge into a still wider avenue which will continue to broaden as it approaches the ultimate objective which is nothing less than the union of

*all* the communions within the Christian Movement in China. The final form which the united Church will take, her ideals as to Faith and Order, cannot be realized until each one of the existing denominations has come with her distinctive contribution.

The Church of Christ in China has a rich heritage brought to her by the Older Churches (who are only passing on the rich fruits received from still Older Churches), out of which will grow a Church that in government and form of worship will harmonize with and satisfy the spirit and aspirations of the Chinese people, through the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit and of Him who is the Great Head of the Church Universal.

48. *With what communions is the Church of Christ in China prepared to negotiate to effect organic union?*

To all evangelical churches in China, whether the Younger Churches of old historic communions; or the smaller, less known groups of Churches; or the widely scattered, though virile, independent Churches; to each and all, the Church of Christ in China extends an earnest invitation to negotiate, individually or unitedly, with a view of effecting mutual organic union,

This standing invitation was officially extended by the First General Assembly, which met at St. Mary's Hall, Shanghai, in 1927. It has been renewed at each succeeding meeting of the General Assembly,

The Second General Assembly, which met in Canton in 1930, expressed the invitation in this wise:

We believe that nothing short of the complete organic unity of the disciples of Christ will satisfy the desire of our Lord who prayed that we might all be one, that the world might believe. We believe that the challenge of the present situation



in China calls for a united facing of the great task of winning China for Christ. Nevertheless confronting such overwhelming responsibility and a task of such magnitude, we find ourselves not yet fully united. Therefore it is resolved: (1) that this General Assembly send greetings to such churches as have expressed a desire for unity, and also to such as have sent greetings and fraternal delegates to this General Assembly; (2) that we reaffirm the action of the First General Assembly as follows:

(a) The Church of Christ in China unequivocally conserves the fundamental doctrines of Evangelical Christianity.

(b) Although the Church of Christ in China has a commonly accepted Bond of Union, nevertheless she has the sincerest respect for the freedom of the local church in matters of belief.

(c) The Church of Christ in China solemnly accepts Christ's holy teachings concerning the unity of His disciples, and, in order also to fulfil the aspirations of the Chinese Church, we are ready and willing to enter into negotiations to achieve organic union with all other evangelical churches who are of a like mind concerning unity. We extend a heartfelt invitation to all who share this desire with us.

49. *What are the prospects of consummating such a comprehensive union of the Christian Churches in China?*

A wise Christian leader of the West has remarked that Christian unity will not come by the way of balanced reasonings, a claim here and a concession there. But it will take place in obedience to some mighty and unanimous impulse in the hearts of those who find God. This unity perhaps will be achieved in consequence of some threatening from the side of the world which can be escaped only by some affirmation of faith and hope and love such as makes us one. Perhaps the Church is destined some day to find herself one, but it may be in the depth of a dark night that the Church will make that blessed discovery.

Some of us wonder if in China that dark night, the black darkness just before the dawning of Christ's hoped for, prayed for day, is not now.

"Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me." (John 17: 20-23)

#### A Prayer for Unity:

O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace; Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions. Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly Union and Concord: that, as there is but one Body, and one Spirit, and one Hope of our Calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may henceforth be all of one heart, and of one soul, united in one holy bond of Truth and Peace, of Faith and Charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify Thee through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (From The Book of Common Prayer.)



# CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CHINA

*Approved by the District Associations, adopted by the  
General Assembly.*

*The Chinese version only is authoritative.*

## *Part I. Name, Purpose, Bond of Union.*

ARTICLE 1: This Church shall be called "The Church of Christ in China."

ARTICLE 2: The Church shall have as its object to unite Christian believers in China, to plan and promote with united strength the spirit of self-support, self-governance and self-propagation, in order to extend Christ's Gospel, practise His Way of Life and spread His Kingdom throughout the world.

ARTICLE 3: Based on the principle of the freedom of formulating her own faith, the bond of union shall consist:—

(1) In our faith in Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and Lord on whom the Christian Church is founded; and in an earnest desire for the establishment of His Kingdom throughout the whole earth.

(2) In our acceptance of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the divinely inspired word of God, and the supreme authority in matters of faith and duty.

(3) In our acknowledgment of the Apostles' Creed as expressing the fundamental doctrines of our common evangelical faith.

ARTICLE 4: All Churches who accept this Constitution are qualified to become a constituent part of this united body.

Any Constituent Church in addition to the acceptance of the bond of union, may retain its original standards of faith.

## *Part II. Grades of Church Councils.*

ARTICLE 5: The Church shall administer its affairs through the following councils:

(a) *Local Church*:—A local church is a company of believers regularly organized and assembling statedly for public worship in one or more places, and recognized by the district association in whose bounds it is located. The method of its organization shall be decided by such district association.

(b) *District Association*:—A district association is a body composed of the lay-representatives of the churches within a defined district and their ministers and their evangelists or licentiates who are recognized by such district association.

(c) *Synod*:—A synod is a body composed of delegates appointed by two or more district associations within a given area.

(d) *The General Assembly*:—The General Assembly, the highest council of the Church, is a body composed of commissioners elected by all the respective synods.

## *Part III. Duties and Powers of Respective Church Councils.*

ARTICLE 6: The local church is the basic organization of the Church. Its duties and powers shall be determined by its district association.

ARTICLE 7: The duties and powers of the district association shall be as follows:

(a) To organize, supervise, assist, or disband churches within its bounds.

(b) By consent of the synod, to train, examine, ordain, install, or discipline all church officers within its bounds.

(c) To promote evangelistic, medical and social work within its bounds.

(d) To decide references and appeals regularly presented by the churches within its bounds.

(e) To review the minutes of the churches within its bounds.

(f) To appoint representatives to the synod within whose bounds it is located.

ARTICLE 8: The duties and powers of synods shall be as follows:

(a) To organize and to determine the boundaries of the district associations within its bounds.

(b) To decide all appeals and other matters referred to it by the district associations within its bounds.

(c) To decide all questions respecting doctrine and church government which may arise in the district associations within its bounds.

(d) To train, examine, ordain, install or discipline officers of the district associations or local churches within its bounds.

(e) To inaugurate, promote and supervise evangelistic, theological, educational, medical and social work within its bounds.

(f) To review minutes of the district associations within its bounds.

(g) To appoint representatives to serve as commissioners of the General Assembly.

ARTICLE 9: The duties and powers of the General Assembly shall be as follows:

(a) To be the representative of the whole Church and to constitute a bond of union among all grades of church councils.

(b) To consider and settle questions that may arise concerning church government or doctrine among the synods.

(c) To determine the standards for the ministry and regulate the reception of ministers from other denominations.

(d) To plan and administer all matters in connection with the interest of the whole Church.

#### *Part IV. Amendments.*

ARTICLE 10: This Constitution shall not be altered, increased or diminished, unless there are two-thirds of the votes from all district associations of the Church affirming such alteration, increase or diminution. District associations in voting on any amendment to this Constitution shall have their number of votes determined by the number of communicants, namely, one vote for every five hundred (500) communicants or fraction thereof.

ARTICLE 11: Votes by district associations on proposed amendments shall be categorically "yes" or "no." The district associations may in separate overtures propose amendments or change, but such must in no wise limit or affect that "yes" or "no" vote on the proposed amendments transmitted to them for approval.

### **BY-LAWS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CHINA**

#### *Part I. Doctrinal Basis of Union.*

ARTICLE 1: The Church of Christ in China has the prerogative of formulating her own doctrinal statement.

ARTICLE 2: Every office bearer in the local churches and district associations of the Church shall declare his acceptance and observance of the bond of union as stated in the Constitution.

#### *Part II. Missionaries.*

ARTICLE 3: Each synod shall have liberty to define for itself the place of the missionary in its organization.

#### *Part III. Local Churches.*

ARTICLE 4: Each local church shall appoint delegates to the district association within whose bounds it is located.

ARTICLE 5: Each local church may adopt its own by-laws which must be in harmony with the Constitution of the Church.

*Part IV. District Associations.*

ARTICLE 6: The representatives appointed by the local church to its district association shall be chosen from among the church officers and in proportion to the number of communicants. Churches with two hundred (200) or more communicant members shall appoint two (2) representatives; churches with five hundred (500) or more shall appoint three representatives. But each local church shall appoint at least one (1) representative.

ARTICLE 7: A district association may permit the local churches within its bounds to increase their number of representatives to attend the district association meeting.

ARTICLE 8: A district association may, whenever necessary, appoint special committees for all branches of work within its bounds and give them instructions and suitable authority and receive their reports.

ARTICLE 9: Each district association may adopt its own by-laws which must be in harmony with the Constitution of the Church.

*Part V. Synod.*

ARTICLE 10: Each district association shall appoint representatives to the synod according to the number of communicant members in the district association. For each five hundred (500) in active membership, it shall appoint two (2) representatives, one of whom shall be a layman. With the permission of the synod, the representation of the district associations may be increased.

ARTICLE 11: A synod may, whenever necessary, appoint special committees for all branches of

work under its jurisdiction and give them instructions and suitable authority and receive their reports.

ARTICLE 12: Each synod may adopt its own by-laws and rules of order, which should be in harmony with the Constitution of the Church.

*Part VI. The General Assembly.*

ARTICLE 13: The number of commissioners from each synod to the General Assembly shall be according to its communicant membership.

For the first three thousand (3,000) communicants or fraction thereof, there shall be two (2) commissioners. For more than three thousand (3,000) up to six thousand (6,000) communicants, there shall be four (4) commissioners. For more than six thousand (6,000) up to ten thousand (10,000) communicants, there shall be six (6) commissioners. For more than ten thousand (10,000) up to fifteen thousand (15,000) communicants, there shall be eight (8) commissioners. For more than fifteen thousand (15,000) communicants, there shall be ten (10) commissioners.

In each case one half of the commissioners shall be ministers and one half laymen.

(Note: This reads as revised by the Third General Assembly and is now being voted upon by the individual district associations as prescribed by the article governing amendments )

ARTICLE 14: Alternates shall be elected for each one of the commissioners appointed.

ARTICLE 15: In the election of commissioners to the General Assembly, care should be taken that there is a proper proportion of men and women, Chinese and missionaries. laymen and ordained pastors.

ARTICLE 16: The officers of the General Assembly shall be:

(a) A Moderator:—The Moderator shall be chosen from among the commissioners present and shall be elected at the close of the General Assembly preceding the one of which he is to be the Moderator.

(b) Two Vice-Moderators: The two Vice-Moderators shall be elected at the first session of the General Assembly and shall be chosen from among the commissioners present. They shall serve only during the meeting of the General Assembly.

(c) Two Temporary Clerks:—The two Temporary Clerks shall be elected at the first session of the General Assembly and shall be chosen from among the commissioners present. They shall serve only during the meeting of the General Assembly.

(d) A Stated Clerk:—The office of the Stated Clerk shall be held concurrently by the General Secretary of the General Council.

(e) An Honorary Treasurer:—The Honorary Treasurer shall be elected for a term of four years at the close of each Assembly.

ARTICLE 17: The General Assembly shall meet once every four years. The time and place for such a meeting shall be determined by the General Council of the General Assembly one year previous to the meeting.

ARTICLE 18: Twenty commissioners assembled at the time and place appointed, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. But these twenty delegates must represent at least two-thirds of the synods and at least one-half of them must be ministers.

ARTICLE 19: Except in special circumstances, the General Assembly should not receive appeals directly from local churches, or district associations.

ARTICLE 20: The General Assembly may, whenever necessary, appoint special committees, commissioners or boards to conduct or to study the affairs of the Church.



ARTICLE 21: The General Assembly may, subject to the approval of district associations, prepare, revise, or amend the Directory of Worship, Form of Government, Book of Discipline.

ARTICLE 22: The General Assembly may appoint the Church's representatives on all interdenominational or union agencies which deal with "extra" or "inter" synodical matters.

ARTICLE 23: The functions of the General Assembly, necessary between assemblies, shall be exercised by its General Council.

ARTICLE 24: The General Assembly may adopt its own by-laws which should be in harmony with the Constitution of the Church.

### *Part VII. The General Council.*

ARTICLE 25: The General Council shall consist of the following members:

(a) The Moderator of the General Assembly.

(b) A representative from each synod, who is elected to this office by the respective synods at the time they elect the commissioners to the General Assembly and from among the commissioners, and the election confirmed by the General Assembly. Each synod shall also at the same time elect an alternate, the election to be confirmed by the General Assembly.

(c) Members-at-large.

(d) The Honorary Treasurer.

ARTICLE 26: The General Assembly shall elect from the Church-at-large as member of the General Council, one (1) for each four (4) synods or fraction thereof.

ARTICLE 27: The officers of the General Council shall be a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Recording Secretary, a General Secretary, and two Executive Secretaries. The Moderator of the General Assembly shall serve as the Chairman of the General Council.

- ARTICLE 28: The General Secretary and the Executive Secretaries shall be nominated by the General Council and elected by the General Assembly for a term of years covered by two General Assembly meetings, subject to re-election at the pleasure of the General Assembly.
- ARTICLE 29: The General Council shall meet at least once every two years. The time and place shall be determined by its Executive Committee.
- ARTICLE 30: Actions of the General Council at its Biennial Meeting shall be operative where power has been conferred, but the same may be reviewed or reversed by the General Assembly or by a vote of a majority of the synods.
- ARTICLE 31: The actions of the General Council shall be transmitted to the synods immediately after each meeting. If a synod takes no action on the minutes of the General Council within one year, such synod shall be considered as having approved the said minutes.
- ARTICLE 32: The General Council shall pass on the budget of the General Council Office and all boards and commissions authorized by the General Assembly.
- ARTICLE 33: The General Council shall prepare a digest of its actions to be submitted to the subsequent meeting of the General Assembly.
- ARTICLE 34: The General Council shall serve as the Nominating and Business Committee of the General Assembly and shall be ex-officio members of said General Assembly.
- ARTICLE 35: The term of a General Council shall begin on the adjournment of the General Assembly and continue until the adjournment of the succeeding General Assembly. Any vacancies within the General Council among the members-at-large shall be filled by appointment by the Council. Vacancies from among the synod representatives shall be temporarily filled by the General Council until a successor is elected by the synod concerned.

ARTICLE 36: The General Council may adopt its own by-laws which should be in harmony with the Constitution of the Church.

ARTICLE 37: The functions of the General Council, necessary between regular meetings, shall be exercised by its Executive Committee. The method of organization of such Executive Committee shall be decided by the General Council.

### *Part VIII. Amendments.*

ARTICLE 38: These By-Laws shall not be altered, increased or diminished, unless there are two-thirds of the votes from all district associations of the Church affirming such alteration, increase or diminution. District associations in voting on any amendment to these By-Laws shall have their number of votes determined by the number of communicants, namely, one (1) vote for every five hundred (500) communicants or fraction thereof.

ARTICLE 39: Votes by district associations on proposed amendments shall be categorically "yes" or "no." The district associations may in separate overtures propose amendments or changes, but such must in no wise limit or affect that "yes" or "no" vote on the proposed amendments transmitted to them for approval.



